

# How Fathers Can Support *the Postpartum Mom*

## *The "Fourth" Trimester*

The first 12 weeks after your baby's birth are a period of adjustment sometimes called the fourth trimester. While Mom is recovering from the birth, you both are adapting to your new role as parents.

## *Dads Matter*

Your support helps Mom recover from the physical and emotional effects of childbirth. It also helps you bond with your baby and grow together as a family.



## **Support Strategies**

### **Understand What Mom Is Going Through**

Mom needs time to recover from the hard work of childbirth. Physically, she may be experiencing multiple postpartum discomforts, such as perineal pain, hemorrhoids, constipation, and sore breasts. If she had a cesarean section, she needs to limit her activity as she heals. Emotionally, she may have periods of anxiety and mild depression known as the "baby blues" in the days after childbirth. Ask her how she is feeling. If she seems to be experiencing depression, encourage her to talk to her healthcare professional.

### **Jump Into Baby Care**

It's true that only your partner can breastfeed the baby, but you can share in all other baby care! Help Mom by bringing her the baby for nighttime feedings. Enjoy special time as you burp, bathe, change, dress, rock, cuddle, sing to, and play with your baby. Sharing one-on-one time with your baby allows you to bond with each other and gives Mom a break to shower, relax, and take care of herself.

### **Tackle the Tasks**

Keeping the household running can be difficult with a new baby. Share in the chores by doing the shopping, cooking, laundry, and cleaning. Don't worry about keeping the home spotless. Give Mom some free time by taking the baby with you while running errands or picking up a healthy takeout meal.

### **Make Mom a Special Priority**

Make sure Mom is taking care of herself while she is caring for the baby. Fix her healthy meals, and offer her plenty of fluids. Put visitors off when Mom is tired. Watch the baby so that she has some personal time for activities or connecting with friends. Shower her with compliments and affection, but be considerate about sex. Wait until your partner is no longer sore and her healthcare professional says it is safe before you mutually decide to resume sex.

### **Take Time for You, Too**

Your focus may be on Mom and the baby, but one of the most important ways you can help them is to take care of yourself. Becoming a father is life-changing, and many new dads feel overwhelmed or even depressed as they juggle new responsibilities. Give yourself time to unwind and to connect with friends and other new dads. Share your concerns with your partner. Don't hesitate to talk to your healthcare professional if you need help.

The information contained in this tear pad is not intended to replace the advice of a healthcare professional.